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Agenda item 8

DRAFT REPORT

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Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1998-1999 (item 4 (a))

Section 2. Political affairs

1. At its 23rd meeting, on 26 June 1997, the Committee considered section 2, Political affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

Discussion

2. Some delegations expressed the opinion that it would be unnecessary to create subprogramme 5, and that the credits of that subprogramme should be allocated under section 1, "Overall policy-making, direction and coordination". Several delegations expressed support for and reaffirmed the importance of activities of the section. Those delegations particularly stressed the importance of the programme of preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution and underlined that efforts should be focused on preventive diplomacy before the conflicts escalated. Other delegations indicated that activities under subprogramme 1, Prevention, control and resolution of conflicts, could prevent the launching of peacekeeping operations. Those delegations, therefore, fully agreed with the narrative in paragraph 2.9, which indicated that the use of peaceful means to bring hostile parties to agreement were the most cost-effective ways by which the Organization could contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security and thus forestall the suffering and destruction that inevitably occurred when disputes degenerated into armed conflict.

3. In connection with subprogramme 2, Assistance and support to the Secretary-General in the political aspects of his relations with Member States, a number of delegations expressed concern about the merger of some of the regional divisions and the advantage to be derived in changing the existing structure of the six regional divisions into four. Other delegations expressed concern over the reductions proposed and the elimination of posts under the subprogramme. Those delegations felt that the reductions might have an impact on the analytical abilities of the Department in undertaking its programme of work. Other delegations welcomed the streamlining of the subprogramme. A number of delegations welcomed the strengthening of coordination between the United Nations and regional organizations, particularly in the settlement of conflicts.

4. One delegation inquired why provisions had not been made for activities relating to CARICOM in the subprogramme, particularly in the light of the recent resolution establishing cooperation between CARICOM and the United Nations and requested information on the activities envisaged for CARICOM during the biennium. The same delegation inquired as to whether there was a cooperation agreement between the Commonwealth Secretariat and the United Nations, and if not, under what auspices were cooperation activities carried out.

5. Some delegations stressed that the functions of the proposed liaison office of the Department of Political Affairs in Addis Ababa should have been included in the budget proposal in a clear manner. They expressed concern that a department of the Secretariat, was - for the first time - establishing its own liaison office to be accredited to a regional organization and stressed that the practice was that only the Secretary-General should dispatch envoys, not Secretariat departments. Those delegations asked about the duplication of functions between the proposed Department of Political Affairs office in Kigali and the special arrangements between OAU and the United Nations concerning the Joint Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region. They expressed support for the idea of a Joint Special Envoy but cautioned against duplication with the proposed Addis Ababa Liaison Office and the Officer of the Department of Political Affairs to be accredited to the UNDP office in Kigali.

6. A number of delegations stressed the importance of the Office of the President of the General Assembly and felt that the Office should be further strengthened. Other delegations felt that the Office of the President might be more appropriately reflected under section 1, Overall policy-making, direction and coordination.

7. In respect of the provisions for servicing of the working groups of the General Assembly, one delegation felt that some of the activities had terminated or would be completed; hence, references to such Working Groups should not have been included in the programme narrative.

8. Several delegations expressed support for subprogramme 3, Electoral assistance. Those delegations attached great importance to the subprogramme and appreciated the work of the Department in that regard. Other delegations indicated that the activities of the subprogramme should be in compliance with the mandates given by the General Assembly and be related to requests from Member States for assistance in the electoral process. Other delegations

questioned the nature of participation of the Centre for Human Rights in electoral assistance activities and its related mandate.

9. One delegation proposed that in the penultimate sentence of paragraph 2.67, the phrase "in accordance with legislative mandates" should be inserted after the word "operations". The same delegation made a similar proposal in connection with paragraph 2.68 (b) (ii) d.

10. Several delegations expressed support for the activities under subprogramme 6, Decolonization, and were concerned over the reductions proposed. Many delegations reaffirmed their full support to the programme of work of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The same delegations considered that the regional seminars of the Special Committee continued to be an important and effective instrument for the discharge of the mandate of the Special Committee. Other delegations did not share that view. Some delegations questioned the resources proposed under the subprogramme, in particular the increase in travel resources for the Special Committee. Other delegations believed that visiting missions of the Special Committee constituted an important activity of the Special Committee. Another delegation questioned the inclusion of resources under intergovernmental bodies whose mandates had already finished. Some delegations felt that the subprogramme should be further strengthened until the mandate of the Special Committee had been fulfilled. In connection with intergovernmental bodies whose mandates had already finished, the representative of the Secretary-General indicated that, since the establishment of those intergovernmental bodies, the mandates had historically been renewed by the General Assembly. Adequate provisions were, therefore, made for the purpose in each biennium.

11. Many delegations expressed support for subprogramme 7, Question of Palestine, until a final settlement of the Palestinian question was reached and supported the full implementation of the activities proposed. One delegation questioned the resources under the subprogramme and indicated that, under present circumstances, resources could be earmarked for other activities in the West Bank, and Gaza Strip such as the United Nations Coordinator for the Occupied Territories, UNRWA or UNDP.

12. A number of delegations expressed support for the overall activities envisaged for programme 26 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, Disarmament. Some delegations expressed support for the Conference on Disarmament and indicated that was the only forum for negotiating treaties. Other delegations queried references to the servicing of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament since the Assembly had reached no agreement on convening such a session. Another delegation questioned the increase in consultant requirements proposed. Other delegations drew attention to the seemingly growing trend towards reduction in resources provided for fellowships for disarmament and could not support such reduction. One delegation did not support the elimination of the three P-5 posts allocated to the three regional centres, but instead considered those posts should be maintained and used to reinforce the Centre for Disarmament Affairs. Other delegations welcomed the reductions proposed under the programme. Some delegations queried references to the servicing to various treaty bodies under

paragraph 2.128 (a) since costs for such bodies were borne by the States parties. Another delegation sought clarification on the use of the phrase "confidence-building measures". Other delegations noted the omission of reference in the narrative to chemical weapons and proposed that paragraph 2.120 be revised to incorporate it in order to reflect progress made in the field of arms limitation and disarmament, non-proliferation and some disarmament measures, particularly in the chemical weapons field. Many delegations regretted that the narrative did not reflect appropriately the lack of sufficient progress, particularly in nuclear weapons. Many delegations expressed concern regarding the insufficiency of resources proposed for servicing the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, and expressed concern about the adverse effect that inadequate resources would have in responding to conflicts. One delegation reiterated that activities relating to the registration of small arms did not constitute a priority and that concentration should continue to be on weapons of mass destruction. Many delegations expressed concern at the decline of resources regarding the disarmament fellowship programme and requested that the situation be adjusted in order to continue to assist diplomats from developing countries in that important field.

Conclusions and recommendations

13. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly the approval of the programme narrative of section 2, Political affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, with the following modifications:

(a) The Committee recommended that the Spanish version of the narrative of paragraph 2.14 should be revised to read fifty-third and fifty-fourth instead of forty-third and forty-fourth;

(b) On the request of the Committee, the Secretariat provided the following description, which the Committee recommends be inserted in paragraph 2.50 after the second sentence:

"The functions of the Department of Political Affairs Liaison Officer at OAU would be:

"(a) To facilitate the exchange of information and the coordination of initiatives and efforts in the areas of preventive diplomacy and peacemaking as well as in the democratization process in Africa:

"(i) To follow closely the deliberations of the OAU Mechanism for the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Conflicts and advise Headquarters of political initiatives of concern to the United Nations discussed by the Mechanism;

"(ii) To liaise with the OAU Division for Conflict Resolution and the Political Department at large with a view to enhancing cooperation on specific political issues of priority concern to the United Nations and OAU;

"(iii) To support the activities of joint United Nations/OAU special representatives;

"(b) To coordinate the implementation of the programmes of cooperation between the United Nations system and OAU agreed to at the annual meetings between their secretariats;

"(c) To perform such representational functions as may be required and necessary at relevant OAU meetings in Addis Ababa.";

(c) In paragraph 2.120, the second sentence should be revised to read: "Since the end of the cold war, developments have been made in a number of important areas in the field of arms control and disarmament.";

(d) In paragraph 2.120, in the last sentence the words after the phrase "international peace and security" should be deleted;

(e) In paragraph 2.124, at the end of the sixth sentence beginning "It is expected to broaden ...", insert the words "in the field of arms control and disarmament".